

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VANCOU 00509 141439Z

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SUBJECT: FORESTRY STRIKE IMMINENT UNLESS GOVERNMENT ACTS

1. UNLESS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENES, THE B.C. FORESTRY INDUSTRY WILL FACE A STRIKE BY SOME 55 THOUSAND MEMBERS OF THREE WOOD, PULP AND PAPER UNIONS. MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOODWORKERS OF AMERICA (IWA), CANADIAN PAPERWORKERS UNION (CPU), AND PULP, PAPER AND WOODWORKERS OF CANADA (PPWC) HAVE VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY TO STRIKE AND HAVE GIVEN STRIKE NOTICE EFFECTIVE JULY 16.

2. UNIONS REQUESTING INCREASE OF BETWEEN 1 DOL AND 1.50 DOL PER HOUR OVER CURRENT RATES. (20 - 30 PERCENT INCREASE.) INDUSTRY BARGAINING REPRESENTATIVE, FORESTRY INDUSTRY RELATIONS COUNCIL, CLAIMS COST WITH FRINGES WOULD BE DOLS 4 HOURLY. INDUSTRY OFFER THUS FAR LIMITED TO COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE.

3. THUS FAR B.C. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN ASKED TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE. NEITHER SIDE SEEMS ANXIOUS TO REQUEST GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION. IMPACT ON B.C. ECONOMY HOWEVER MAY FORCE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO BECOME INVOLVED WITHOUT INVITATION.

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PAGE 02 VANCOU 00509 141439Z

RM FORESTRY INDUSTRY SPOKESMEN CLAIM POOR MARKET CONDITIONS FOR

WOOD PRODUCTS IN U.S. AND PULP IN JAPAN MAKE LARGE INCREASE IN WAGES AN UNREALISTIC DEMAND. HUGE WAGE INCREASES WOULD PRICE B.C. OUT OF THE MARKET THEY SAY.

5. UNIONS INVOLVED PLANNING TO DISRUPT AS MANY WOOD-RELATED INDUSTRIES AND SERVICES AS POSSIBLE. TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES, TRUCKING, SHIPPING AND RAIL WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY AFFECTED. PAPER PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS EXPECTED ALSO TO BE PICKETED. HIGHEST ESTIMATE IS THAT 225,000 WORKERS COULD BE AFFECTED. THIS REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT OF B.C.'S LABOR FORCE. B.C. GOVERNMENT WOULD SUFFER DRAMATIC TAX REVENUE DECLINE.

6. COMMENT: WHILE UNIONS INVOLVED ARE COORDINATING THEIR DEMANDS TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT, INDUSTRY MAY BE IN STRONGER BARGAINING POSITION BECAUSE OF ABOVE MENTIONED MARKET CONDITIONS. IN PAST SEVERAL MONTHS A NUMBER OF MILLS HAVE SHUT DOWN AND OTHERS HAVE REDUCED FROM 3 TO 2 SHIFTS. AS FAR BACK AS SEPTEMBER 1974 SOME MILLS WERE ALREADY ADDING TO INVENTORY RATHER THAN SHUT DOWN. WHILE EXACT FIGURES NOT AVAILABLE WOOD INVENTORIES SAID TO BE HIGHEST EVER. PULP AND PAPER SECTOR MAY NOT HAVE AS MUCH INVENTORY ON HAND AS MARKET DECLINE IN THIS SECTOR OCCURRED MORE RECENTLY. BARCAS

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